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ABSTRACT

This report is a study of present practices and task force recommendations for restructuring education for middle-level learners in the State of Indiana. In spring 1989, a survey was distributed to 445 schools statewide that house students of grades 5-9. The responses from the 243 returns indicate that middle-school theory has not been fully implemented by Indiana schools. Statewide public forums in spring 1991 identified professional development, school organization, collaboration, and state regulations as issues of concern. Profiled are the needs and social and emotional, cognitive, and physical characteristics of young adolescents. Using this information and a study of the publication "Turning Points," the task force developed a checklist that constitutes its vision for exemplary middle schools. Areas of discussion and recommendations include collaboration of services, school as a health-promoting environment, developmentally appropriate curriculum and resources, elimination of tracking. and preparation and certification of middle-school professionals. (Contains 23 references.) (RR)

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Middle Grades School State Policy Initiative Project Task Force Report
funded with a grant from the
Carnegie Corporation of New York

1991

Indiana Department of Education
Center for School Improvement and Performance
Office of School Assistance

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Foreword

A Message from H. Dean Evans
Superintendent of Public Instruction

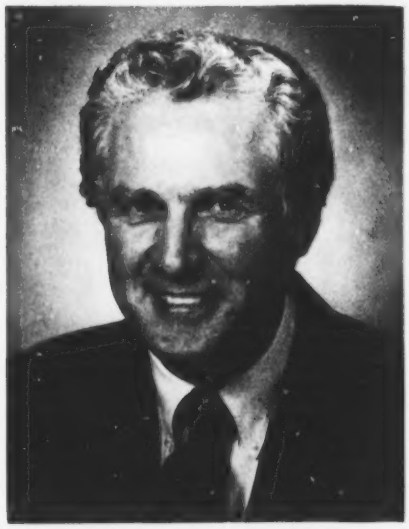
The Indiana Middle Level Task Force was appointed in August 1990 to study the plight of young adolescents in Indiana and to evaluate the recommendations made in the Carnegie publication, *Turning Points*.

Traditionally, we have planned and provided for elementary and secondary students, but recently we have placed greater emphasis upon the uniqueness of the middle level learner. Some of my most enjoyable years in education have been as an administrator at the middle level where I worked with this group of young adolescents with distinct characteristics and needs – a group caught "in between" the elementary grades and high school, "betwixt" childhood and adolescence.

These middle level learners or young adolescents are roughly ages 10 to 15 and attend school in Grades 5 through 9. They experience critical biological, cognitive, and social changes; they engage in exploratory, risk-taking behavior; they form self-concepts and habits that often last a lifetime; and they make decisions that have long-range effects on their educational and economic futures.

To educate these middle level learners, we must first recognize their unique developmental needs and second plan educational environments for meeting those needs. This report is a study of our present practices and task force recommendations for restructuring education for middle level learners in the state of Indiana. Hopefully, it will provide local school personnel with direction and assistance as they plan and provide for young adolescent Hoosiers.

H. Dean Evans
Superintendent of
Public Instruction



Middle grade schools have been virtually ignored in discussions of educational reform in the past decade. Yet, they are central not only to channeling every young adolescent into the mainstream of life in American communities, but also to making vast improvements in academic and personal outcomes for all youth."

—Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. *Turning Points, Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century: The Report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents.* Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1989, p. 32.

Indiana
State Board of Education

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317/232-6622

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE INDIANA MIDDLE GRADES TASK FORCE

WHEREAS, young adolescents face significant turning points and make fateful choices; and

WHEREAS, these choices can lead to preventable problems, such as dropout, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse that, in turn, can lead to a diminished future; and

WHEREAS, appropriate programs in middle level schools can help students avoid these problems and choose a path toward a productive and fulfilling life; and

WHEREAS, the Indiana Middle Grades Task Force, which was supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, met numerous times and made a significant contribution to middle school restructuring by producing "Betwixt and Between," which will become an important resource in Indiana and the United States; and

WHEREAS, "Betwixt and Between" identifies characteristics of A+ Middle Level Schools and presents recommendations that can improve middle level education and help students make appropriate choices;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Indiana State Board of Education thanks the members of the Indiana Middle Grades Task Force for devoting countless hours in studying the barriers and potential incentives for middle level reform.

2. That the Indiana State Board of Education urges middle level schools to use the A+ Vision as a resource in their own restructuring efforts and to take steps necessary and practical to improve middle level education.

Adopted this Fifth day of September, 1991.

H. Dean Evans

H. Dean Evans, Chairman
Indiana State Board of Education

Acknowledgments

This monograph is the product of the collaborative efforts of many people, among them are:

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- Cynthia Brown and Burton Taylor of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) who provided technical assistance throughout the grant year;

- the Indiana Middle School Association, whose officers and members participated on our task force and who contributed many hours of "cooperative problem-solving";

- the senior officers and members of several divisions within the Indiana Department of Education who contributed their valuable time and expertise to examine and promote middle level education across the state.

Special thanks goes to Joan Lipsitz of Lilly Endowment, Inc., for contributing her time and wisdom to our endeavors. The generous funding of Lilly Endowment, Inc., enabled the task force to make many site visits and to invite middle level experts to Indiana.

Finally, the grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York has provided an impetus to study and reform middle level education in Indiana. Carnegie's financial contribution is deeply appreciated and will continue to have a far-reaching impact on the lives of young adolescent Hoosiers.

Carnegie Middle Grades School State Policy Initiative
Indiana Middle Level Task Force Members
1990-1991

Barbara Alborn
Division of Health and Education
Indiana State Board of Health

John Baker
Center for Professional Development
Indiana Department of Education

Kris Bosworth
Center for Adolescent Programs
School of Education, Indiana Univeristy

Irma Boyette
Education Director
The Urban League of Indianapolis

T. Scott Bryan
Assistant Superintendent
Hamilton Heights School Corporation

Deborah Butler
Teacher Education Program
Wabash College

Sam Carman
Education Specialist
Department of Natural Resources

M. Beth Copenhaver
Principal
Guion Creek Middle School

Judy Corbett
Social Services Division
Indiana Department of Human Services

Linda Cornwell
REAP Project
Indiana Department of Education

Carole Craig
Principal
John Marshall Junior High School

Barbara S. DeHart
Program Associate, Education
Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Leah Ingraham
AIDS Consultant
Indiana Department of Education

Deanna Durrett
Policy and Planning Specialist
Indiana Department of Education

Sabrina Edwards
Adolescent Health Coordinator
Indiana State Board of Health

Don Ernst
Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of the Governor

Norma Faust
Teacher
Harwood Middle School

Ann Grimes
Teacher
Crispus Attucks Junior High School

Mary Groves
Guidance Counselor
Yorktown Middle School

Van Hambrick
Principal
Bailly Middle School

Mary Pat Hatcher-Disler
Teacher
South Bend Community Schools

Ellen Hendricks
Teacher
Southeast Dubois County Schools

Sally Herrholz
Director
Big Sisters of Marion County

G. Thomas Houlihan
Executive Associate
C.L.A.S.S.

Jack Humphrey
Director of Reading and
School/Community Programs
Evansville-Vanderburgh Schools

Susan O'Connor
Children and Family Services
State Department of Public Welfare

Susan Jacobs
Executive Assistant to Commissioner
Indiana Department of Human Services

Betty Johnson, Director
Office of School Assistance
Indiana Department of Education

Grace Ketchum
CASSP Program Coordinator
Department of Mental Health

Jim Killen
Director
Indiana Youth Services Association

David Krentler
Teacher
Lowell Elementary School

Leah Lefstein
Deputy Director
Indiana Youth Institute

Phyllis Lewis
Health Consultant
Indiana Department of Education

Joan Lipsitz
Program Director, Education
Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Bob Malinka
Assistant Superintendent
Franklin Comunity Schools

Bonnie McClain
Teacher
Yorktown Middle School

Dennis Meyer
Supervisor of Education
Rockville Training Center

Barbara Moore Jackson
Director
Middle Grades Improvement Network

Rudolph Wilson
Principal
Northview Middle School

James Zwick
Teacher
Guion Creek Middle School

The Honorable James Payne
Marion County Juvenile Court
Juvenile Justice System

Bernadette Perham
Department of Mathematical Services
Ball State University

Barbara Poore
Independent Education Consultant

Steve Riggs
Director
Anthis Career Center

Jill Robertson
President, Indiana Congress
of Parents and Teachers (PTA)

Eugenia Sacopulos
Principal
Dunbar-Pulaski Middle School

Evelyn Sayers
Center for School Improvement and Performance
Indiana Department of Education

Carolyn Sollman
Teacher
Eminence Elementary School

Dennis Sorge
Mathematics Department
Purdue University

Mark St. John
Grants Coordinator
Indiana Department of Human Services

Phyllis Land Usher, Senior Officer
Center for School Improvement and Peformance
Indiana Department of Education

Tina Weisman
Christa McAuliffe Fellow
Pike County Schools

Sig Zielke
Adolescent Clinical Specialist
Koala Centers

Jeff Iacobazzi
Program Consultant
Indiana Department of Mental Health

Task Force Staff
1990-1991

Margaret Berry . . . . . Project Secretary
Office of School Assistance
Indiana Department of Education

Patricia Douglas . . . . . Project Director
Office of School Assistance
Indiana Department of Education

Lisa Lozano . . . . . Monograph Editor
Office of School Assistance
Indiana Department of Education

Jeff Swensson . . . . . Task Force Chairperson
Principal
Stonybrook Junior High School

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Introduction

In spring 1989, the Indiana Department of Education distributed a survey to gather information about middle level schools in Indiana. The survey went to 445 schools statewide which housed students of Grades 5-9 in a variety of configurations. Of those surveyed, 243 responded. The results revealed that middle school theory has not been fully implemented by Indiana schools. In fact:

- less than 50 percent of the schools have any type of block scheduling;
- only 33 percent of the schools utilize interdisciplinary teaching;
- only 33 percent of those schools with interdisciplinary teaching offer a separate preparation period for the teachers who are involved;
- only 25 percent of the schools have advisor/advisee programs;
- over 65 percent practice some form of ability grouping; and
- nearly 50 percent indicate that their staff had not received any type of inservice specifically related to middle school education.

In the past few years, the middle school movement has gained momentum. Lilly Endowment, Inc., has contributed generously to Indiana middle level schools through the Middle Grades Improvement Network (MGIP). The Indiana Middle School Association has sponsored state-level conferences the past three years, bringing hundreds of educators together for workshops centered on improving middle level education. A state task force was developed by the Indiana Department of Education to identify the unique needs of middle grades students and to develop programs that best serve these students. The stage is set, and the momentum is building to further expand the middle school movement in Indiana and to help schools for young adolescents implement middle school philosophy.

During spring 1991, eight statewide public forums were held at the Education Service Centers around the state to facilitate a dialogue about middle level issues among educators, community members, and the Indiana Middle Level Task Force. Together, these groups discussed the recommendations from *Turning Points*, the degree of current implementation of those recommendations, and the incentives and barriers for middle level reform in Indiana. These discussions identified the following issues of concern:

1. Professional Development
2. School Organization
3. Collaboration
4. State Regulations

Professional Development

- Inadequate staff development due to financial and time constraints is a barrier to middle level reform.
- Staff development and team planning time are expensive in terms of dollars and hours, but are crucial components of good middle level programs.

Resource

A full report and evaluation of this survey is available through IDEAnet, a computer data base housed at the Indiana Department of Education. Please call 1 (800) 527-4931 or (317) 232-0808 for information regarding access.

- Professional development should involve all levels of school personnel, including support staff, teachers, principals, and superintendents.
- It was noted that some schools in Indiana have restructured without requiring extra funding by using inexpensive staff development, such as video and audio tapes; researched reports by staff at faculty meetings; and staff representatives attending conferences.

School Organization

- Advisor/advisee programs, creative scheduling, and team planning time must be part of the middle level school.
- Pull-out programs such as tracking, Chapter 1, and special education should be reevaluated to achieve equity and more effective use of school resources.
- Business-to-school partnerships should be cultivated.

Collaboration

- Increased communication and information-sharing between schools is needed.
- Networks of individual schools, as well as an interagency network system of business and community resources, should be created.

State Regulations

- Present state law and education policy are perceived by schools as barriers to middle level reform.
- Current regulations concerning textbooks, minutes per subject time, and teacher preparation should be reevaluated.
- Local control and empowerment of educators should shift the Indiana Department of Education's role from one of enforcer to facilitator.

"Young adolescents today make fateful choices, fateful for them and for our nation. The period of life from ages 10 to 15 represents for many young people their last best chance to choose a path toward productive and fulfilling lives."

– *Turning Points,* p. 20

Being Betwixt and Between

Young adolescents are between ages 10 and 15 and are usually fifth through ninth graders. During this period they are experiencing great physical, intellectual, emotional, and social change. Their most common characteristic is their difference from one another; yet, they have more in common with each other than with elementary or high school learners.

Cultural and biological changes, as well as an increased period of formal education, have greatly impacted what it means to be an adolescent. Because of improved health care and nutrition, the average onset of puberty is now four years younger than the average age of onset 150 years ago. Because of increased technology and educational opportunities, a longer period of formal education is required to attain employment that leads to economic independence and, thus, full adulthood.

The earlier onset of puberty and the delayed entry into the workplace have lengthened adolescence – the period between childhood and adulthood – causing an intermediate stage of "preadolescence" to appear. Approximately 50 years ago adolescents, or teenagers, emerged. Today, as our life spans increase and our world becomes more sophisticated, young adolescents, or "tweenagers" have emerged.

Research is explicit in noting a mismatch between many education practices and the needs of preadolescents (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990; Lounsbury and Clark, 1990). Often present practices are unsuccessful because they suppress or ignore young adolescent needs and characteristics rather than acknowledging and engaging them.

The choices young adolescents must make are critical and life-determining. Because these few awkward years create a turning point in human development, it is vital to our future that we come to understand the nature of middle level learners. In the recent decade of school reform, little emphasis has been placed on understanding this group because, traditionally, we have divided public school education into two categories, primary and secondary. Only recently, have we begun to recognize the unique characteristics and needs of those learners who are "betwixt and between."

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"I think they should make learning a whole lot more fun than what it is now, instead of just sitting in a classroom, doing what seems like nothing. Just get some different things, instead of doing the same routine every day: bell rings, go to class, sit there, open up a book, write, close books, and go to the next class."

—eighth grader

"What causes me to doze off is the teachers; they talk too much. They just prepare their lesson plans and just talk. Who wants to just sit there and listen to a teacher talk?"

— ninth grader

Needs of Young Adolescents

A widely accepted list of the needs of young adolescents has been developed by Gayle Dorman, author of the *Middle Grades Assessment Program*, MGAP, from the Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina. These seven needs are identified as follows:

1. **Competence and Achievement** – Young adolescents need many opportunities to develop self-confidence and to receive recognition for a wide variety of competencies. High-quality instruction and content, high expectations for all students, and a wide range of extracurricular activities are recommended.

2. **Self-exploration That Leads to Self-definition** – Young adolescents need time and opportunities to explore themselves and the world around them. A curriculum that capitalizes on student interests, relationships, and development is recommended.

3. **Social Interaction with Peers and Adults** – Young adolescents look to each other for direction and criticism through peer pressure and group feedback. Young adolescents also need adults as models of appropriate behavior. School organization and instruction that builds on peer interaction, such as peer

teaching and small-group learning, and programs that provide for significant relationships with adults, such as advisor/advisee, are recommended.

4. **Physical Activity**—Young adolescents need to vent their energy and to develop their growing muscles and bones while improving physical coordination. A school structure that provides for physical energy in noncompetitive ways is recommended. A variety of after-school activities for all students is recommended over traditional between-school sports.

5. **Meaningful Participation in School and Community**—Young adolescents need to experience independence, responsibility, and opportunities to take initiative and make decisions that determine their roles in school and society. Student-initiated activities, such as student councils, school improvement projects, and service programs, are recommended.

6. **Routine, Limits, and Structure**—Young adolescents need guidelines and advice in setting their own limits and structure. Clearly stated rules, expectations, and consequences are recommended.

7. **Diversity**—Young adolescents develop at varying rates among and within themselves; therefore, they need a diversified learning environment that encourages exploration. A variety of teaching styles, methods, materials, and scheduling is recommended.

Physical Characteristics of Young Adolescents

Young adolescents are growing physically at varying rates. While they may be the same age, they may vary greatly in size from each other. Awkwardness and poor motor coordination occur for young adolescents when their hands and feet grow to full adult size but their height and weight remain that of a child. It is imperative that we acknowledge these characteristics and rethink our emphasis on the competition and comparison of contact sports. Physical diversity at the middle level requires a variety of recreational activities emphasizing exploration, fitness, health, and participation by **all** students.

Additionally, young adolescents are increasingly concerned with their changing bodies, constantly comparing themselves to their peers. Any physical difference is not seen by the young adolescent as normal human growth, but as personal inadequacy. Many young adolescents need more privacy. Greater efforts to respect that need must be made when school physical education programs require undressing and dressing for class and showering. When the need for privacy is not met, the physical fitness needs of young adolescents often go unmet as well.

Some students may "forget" their gym clothes to avoid the embarrassment of undressing in front of their peers. Others may dress for gym, but not participate fully to avoid sweating and, thus, the showers. In either case, students do not get the physical exercise they need nor the benefit and practice of good personal hygiene. Block scheduling in the middle level school can allow for the flexibility in time and space needed to meet these needs.

> "Biologically, today's young adolescents are approximately two years in advance of the young people for whom the first junior high schools in America were established. They are capable of reproduction at what to many adults seems a shockingly early age. Socially, however, we consider them younger than their grandparents and give them fewer outlets for responsible social behavior. Yet the early onset of puberty imposes responsibility for their sexual behavior at a much younger age than we required of their grandparents. They are at once socially younger and biologically older."
>
> — Joan Lipsitz, *Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*

- growth is accelerated and uneven; such a growth spurt has not happened since infancy and will not happen again throughout life
- muscular development and body framework are disproportionate
- motor coordination is poor; awkwardness results from uneven growth within the individual – for example, bones grow faster than muscles, legs and arms grow faster than the trunk, and hands and feet may grow faster than arms and legs
- minor accidents are common because of rapid growth, awkwardness, and a high activity level
- growth between groups is uneven; for example, girls are usually taller and proportionately heavier than boys since girls tend to be a year ahead of boys in the growth cycle; much variability occurs among individuals of each group
- alertness, excessive energy, and high activity levels are often followed by fatigue and stoop in posture
- physical maturity has occurred at earlier and earlier ages over the past 100 years
- fads, through peer pressure, become important motivators to change physical and personal appearance
- inquisitiveness and curiosity about their bodies follows internal and external bodily change

> "I turned 12 in April and I'm six foot. I look older than I am, so somebody will think I'm a lot older. And then I get treated so bad once they find out I'm younger than they are. They think I lied about my age."
> – seventh grader

Cognitive Characteristics of Young Adolescents

Young adolescents experience great cognitive change. Some are fully able to engage in formal reasoning, to think in abstract terms, understand symbolism, interpret and infer meaning. Some are just beginning to engage in abstract thought, but only in certain areas, perhaps only verbally or spatially. Others are only able to think in concrete terms, needing plenty of examples, illustrations, and modeling to grasp concepts.

Educational research reveals that this process of cognitive development, from concrete to formal reasoning, is not continuous and does not occur evenly in all subject areas (Smart and Smart, 1973). There is great variability among students in the acquisition of formal reasoning, and there is great variability within individuals.

While the average age of onset for formal reasoning is age 11, there may be as much as a four-year lag for some students (Piaget, 1977). Such a lag should not be mistakenly interpreted as a permanent deficiency, but merely as a difference that may disappear with time. Additionally, the rapid, frequent, and wide fluctuations in attention span, emotional state, and self-concept experienced by young adolescents can greatly affect the development of their thinking skills (Van Hoose and Strahan, 1989).

Given the vast number of variables affecting the cognitive development of young adolescents, it is apparent that to determine once and for all a student's ability level before or during the middle level years is an inaccurate and harmful practice that can severely limit self-esteem and educational opportunities (Oakes, 1990).

In spite of this information, we label and track on the basis of standardized tests, which for many students may represent nothing more than difficult and anxious high-stakes moments of total success or total failure. All too often, students become stuck in a track for much of their school years even though they have grown, or could have grown, beyond our labels.

Cognitive diversity requires flexible grouping and regrouping according to the ever-changing needs of the moment. High expectations, high support, rich content, and a variety of assessment techniques are required for all students. Energy, curiosity, self-exploration, and peer-group concerns require opportunities for creative and spontaneous learning that uses cooperative peer interaction.

- movement from concrete thinking to formal or abstract thinking abilities

  concrete thinking – ability to manipulate ideas only in the presence of actual, tangible things and immediate experiences

  formal/abstract thinking – ability to understand the theoretical and hypothetical; to develop ideas about ideas, understand symbols and abstract concepts

- cognitive abilities vary greatly among and within young adolescents
- metacognition becomes possible; students can engage in reflexive thinking or "thinking about thinking"
- active, hands-on learning is preferred over passive learning
- interaction with peers during activities is effective for learning
- willingness to learn things considered useful; young adolescents enjoy using skills to solve real-life problems

> "There is a common misconception that higher order skills must mean advanced skills – the skills you get to after you master the lower order skills. This is not the case. All students think; all students can learn ways to think better. No matter how competent students may be or may not be, they must organize their ideas; they must organize their time; they must solve complex problems; and they must think critically."
>
> – *Caught in the Middle*, California State Department of Education

> "The best thing about school is when we do special projects that are challenging and fun, and when teachers want you to learn as much as you can."
>
> – seventh grader

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Social and Emotional Characteristics of Young Adolescents

Young adolescents experience hormonal changes that give them great bursts of energy. They are intensely curious about their growing bodies and their roles in the world around them. They are preoccupied with being accepted and finding a place within their peer group.

Young adolescents crave exploration, but almost always in a very egocentric way. In spite of this energy, curiosity, and self-concern, we continue to organize school around brief, unrelated classes of large numbers where students sit isolated in regimented rows and fill out impersonal worksheets created by distant textbook companies.

To create more developmentally appropriate school programs for young adolescents, it is crucial to reorganize the school in response to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents. The middle school years for many may be the last best chance to become involved in learning that leads to productive and fulfilling lives.

Life-long habits are formed at this age and self-concepts developed in young adolescence continue throughout adulthood. Many young adolescents are standing at a crossroads, deciding whether to stay in or drop out of school; to abstain from or engage in risky behavior, such as smoking, alcohol use, and sexual activity; to accept a negative or a positive self-concept. Such decisions impact the future of each student, as well as the future of our society.

- goals become more future-oriented and realistic; the young adolescent is ready to be trusted to assume personal responsibility for his/her learning
- identity formation occurs as bodily changes and new social roles require new self-concepts; these self-concepts and identities continue to change often and rapidly
- self-identity is sought through acceptance/rejection of idols or heroes and by association with cliques or crowds; increasingly young adolescents conform to peer influences and gender-related stereotypes
- comparison of self to others becomes a preoccupation; the young adolescent recognizes the great diversity in development among peers, but usually sees his/her own differences as personal inadequacy
- social conformity becomes the basis for moral decisions; very few young adolescents have developed autonomous moral principles and an orientation toward internal decisions of conscience
- peer group is used to explore self, test new identities, receive feedback, and develop the capacity to sustain emotional relationships
- positive peer group involvement creates more commitment to achievement, self, friends, and social order; negative peer group involvement causes young adolescents to form negative self-perceptions and feelings of loneliness and failure
- dating begins, but opposite-sex relationships often have a superficial and game-like quality while same-sex friendships continue to dominate
- ability to perceive of two parallel social worlds (family and peers) develops; young adolescents can distinguish between the norms and conventions of both
- autonomous and assertive behavior increases within the family; young adolescents yearn for independence and begin to loosen childhood ties while continuing to value and need family support.

> "The academic achievements of young adolescents may rise or fall due to the perceived quality of their social life. If they feel rejected, they may invest an inordinate amount of time and energy on social matters to compensate for their sense of inadequacy. That leaves less time for academic concerns. If they feel accepted by peers, young adolescents are much more likely to apply themselves to academic work."
>
> – Van Hoose and Strahan, *Young Adolescent Development*

"One of my friends has a lot of peer pressure. She used to be a really nice kid, but she started hanging around with the wrong crowd. It caused her to do stuff that she would never do before."

– ninth grader

Resources

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"One of the worst things about school is getting embarrassed if you forget your work at home, or do something like talking in class, or if you just do something and the teacher gets mad at you. Teachers should talk to you alone instead of in front of the whole class."

– fifth grader

Messages from "Turning Points"

The Indiana Middle Level Task Force studied the Carnegie publication *Turning Points* to begin discovering and defining a vision for middle level schools in Indiana. The following eight recommendations summarize the Carnegie plan for middle school reform.

Create Small Communities for Learning

- organize "houses," "teams," or "schools-within-schools"
- form teams of teachers and students to work within the "houses"
- assign an adult advisor for every student

Teach a Core Curriculum

- emphasize critical thinking and problem solving
- integrate curriculum with thematic or interdisciplinary units
- teach healthy lifestyles by including life sciences as an integral part of the curriculum
- involve students as active citizens through community service

> "Most young adolescents attend massive, impersonal schools, learn from unconnected and seemingly irrelevant curricula, know well and trust few adults in school, and lack access to health care and counseling. Millions of these young people fail to receive the guidance and attention they need to become healthy, thoughtful, and productive adults."
>
> – *Turning Points*, p. 13

Ensure Success for All Students

- eliminate tracking; use cooperative learning and peer tutoring
- provide flexible scheduling to accommodate integrated curriculum
- expand opportunities for learning through a variety of programs before and after school, weekends, and summers

Empower Teachers and Administrators

- provide teachers opportunities to set curricular goals, allocate budget and space, choose methods and materials, schedule students
- establish building governance committees of teachers, students, administrators, support staff, parents, and community members
- designate leaders for each "house" or "team"

> "Teachers must have greater authority to make decisions, and responsibility for the consequences of those decisions, regarding the day-to-day educational experiences of their students. Dramatically improved outcomes for young adolescents require individualized, responsive, and creative approaches to teaching that will occur only when teachers are able to use their intimate knowledge of students to design instructional programs."
>
> – *Turning Points*, p. 54

Staff Middle Grade Schools with Teachers Who Are Expert at Teaching Young Adolescents

- develop expert teachers for young adolescents through specific middle school programs at the university level
- establish ongoing staff development for educators in the field

> "The success of the transformed middle grade school will stand or fall on the willingness of teachers and other staff to invest their efforts in the young adolescent student. Teachers must understand and want to teach young adolescents and find the middle grade schools a rewarding place to work."
>
> — *Turning Points*, p. 58

Improve Academic Performance Through Better Health and Fitness

- ensure access to health services by coordinating health education activities within the school
- provide school-based or school-linked clinics for counseling and health care
- establish school as a health-promoting environment that serves nutritious meals, is smoke free, provides a variety of physical activities for everyone, and is safe from violence

> "Students who are hungry, sick, troubled, or depressed cannot function well in the classroom, no matter how good the school."
>
> — *Turning Points*, p. 32

Reengage Families in the Education of Young Adolescents

- offer families meaningful roles in school governance with schoolwide committees
- keep families informed through newsletters, calls, conferences, and home visits
- offer families opportunities to support learning at home and at school by serving as resources, supervisors, and coordinators

Connect Schools with Communities

- provide community opportunities for youth service
- ensure student access to community health and social services
- support middle level education with community-wide study places, tutors, homework hotlines, alternative programs for dropouts
- augment resources for teachers and students through community contributions of funds, equipment, and partnerships
- expand career guidance for students through mentoring

> "A community that sets out to educate all of its young adolescents to become competent, responsible, and productive adults must marshal its resources behind its schools. In communities with ample or restricted school budgets, resources from the nonprofit and private sectors, health care professions, and other institutions can add intangible and invaluable dimensions to the educational process."
>
> — *Turning Points*, p. 70

Vision for A+ Middle Level Schools in Indiana

From the broad recommendations of *Turning Points*, the Indiana Middle Level Task Force developed the following checklist of characteristics for exemplary middle level schools in Indiana. This checklist constitutes the task force vision for middle level reform across the state. How would you rate your school?

	Fully Implemented	Somewhat Implemented	Not Implemented
School improvement council	☐	☐	☐
Teams or "schools-within-schools"	☐	☐	☐
Teachers and students teamed for more than one year	☐	☐	☐
Team planning time	☐	☐	☐
Flexible or block scheduling	☐	☐	☐
Advisor/advisee program	☐	☐	☐
Interdisciplinary curriculum	☐	☐	☐
Cooperative learning	☐	☐	☐
Hands-on/active learning	☐	☐	☐
Student as worker/Teacher as facilitator	☐	☐	☐
Schoolwide participation in exploratory activities	☐	☐	☐
Community service opportunities	☐	☐	☐
Authentic assessment	☐	☐	☐
Wide variety of areas for student recognition	☐	☐	☐
Heterogeneous grouping throughout curriculum	☐	☐	☐
Elimination of corporal punishment	☐	☐	☐
Coordinated access to health and counseling services	☐	☐	☐
Community mentoring program	☐	☐	☐
Ongoing parent involvement	☐	☐	☐
Continual staff development	☐	☐	☐

Fully implementing the **A+ Middle Level School Vision** requires the following strategies which are developmentally appropriate for young adolescents.

School Improvement Council

- an ongoing school governance committee
- consists of teachers, administrators, school support staff, parents, students, and representatives from businesses, youth service organizations, and the community
- participates in all operations of the school

Small Communities of Learners

- a personal learning environment is created
- all students have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult through an advisor/advisee program or similar student support program
- a strong recognition/reward program supports all students
- school organization consists of teams of students and teachers forming together a "house" within the school
- teachers and students stay together within their "house" throughout a student's middle school career
- teams consists of teachers licensed in a rich variety of subject areas
- a designated team leader is recognized and compensated
- time is made available within the school day for team planning, as well as individual teacher planning
- each team is empowered to make decisions concerning the management of its "house," including budgeting, space allocation, curriculum and methods, scheduling, and discipline policies
- flexible or block scheduling exists to fully engage interdisciplinary learning

Core Curriculum

- learning content and instruction is developmentally appropriate in that it is organized around the needs and concerns of young adolescents
- curriculum consists of interdisciplinary units in which the various separate subjects (math, social studies, language arts, science, fine arts, music, physical education, industrial arts, home economics, etc.) blend into integrated lessons as they relate to a central theme or issue of interest and importance to students
- instructional methods are developmentally appropriate in that they actively engage students in learning; lesson plans use an inquiry orientation in which students' questions drive the course of study and teachers are facilitators, not lecturers or conveyors of facts
- cooperative learning, peer teaching/tutoring, and hands-on activities are the primary teaching methods
- a rich diversity of clubs and extracurricular opportunities are available for every student to explore his/her interests
- a variety of intramural recreational activities are available so that every student can enjoy physical exercise and fitness; there is no emphasis on creating future high school athletes or sports stars
- a community service component is included in the curriculum to inspire students to develop good citizenship and a sense of social responsibility and values

Authentic Assessment

- a means of situational or authentic assessment is used to evaluate students
- students have many opportunities to demonstrate achievement and ability, rather than one or two high-stakes moments, such as unit tests or final exams
- portfolios of student work developed over long periods of time are used, as well as other developmentally appropriate methods, such as hands-on labs and creative projects
- all students are challenged to high levels of critical thinking, not mere recall of memorized facts

Success for All Students

- heterogeneous grouping is used advantageously in cooperative learning groups, cross-age tutoring, and peer teaching
- tracking has been eliminated; students move in and out of flexible groups according to current and ever-changing needs and interests
- students of all ability levels are equal members of each "house"
- developing and enhancing each student's self-esteem is of primary importance
- high-level content, high-level thinking, and high expectations are afforded to every student in order to promote positive mental health, validation of personal competence, and achievement of the greatest level of academic competence possible
- the school environment promotes acceptance and respect of self and others
- students feel safe from violence, drug-related activity, and all types of abuse
- there is no corporal punishment; discipline programs are proactive, not reactive; rewards are emphasized over punishments
- students are readily recognized for a variety of achievements and accomplishments, not just those that are academic or sports-related; everyone has the opportunity to feel like a winner
- a counseling component emphasizing prevention, such as the Indiana Department of Education's Developmental Guidance Program, is in place which emphasizes maintenance of mental health and career/vocational guidance

Community Connections

- students participate as valued members of the community through a service component within the curriculum
- community members, parents, family members, and business leaders are considered school and classroom resources to model and share ideas, experiences, responsibilities
- programs are available that link students with community resources and family service agencies; students can easily access community service agencies from the school
- businesses, churches, youth service organizations are involved on the school improvement council

Teachers as Lifelong Learners

- staff development programs are used for continual improvement and movement toward long-range school goals
- staff is dedicated to middle level students and strategies; their training and certification process is tied to knowledge of the developmental characteristics and needs of young adolescents
- a recognition structure is in place to motivate and reward exemplary teachers
- all staff value and participate in ongoing professional development

Collaboration of Services for Young Adolescents

The Indiana Middle Level Task Force has found a need for greater collaboration among service agencies for young adolescents. This collaboration, or the lack of it, affects many areas in the lives of adolescents, such as their health, education, and family relations.

To effectively meet the needs of young adolescents, greater collaboration must be promoted between schools and the community, families, service centers and schools, educators and administrators, various state agencies, and areas within the Indiana Department of Education.

The Indiana Legislative Services Agency reports that Indiana spends only $1 on preventive efforts to reduce stress factors on young adolescents for every $10 spent on remediation efforts to that same end. To reverse this spending pattern, the Indiana Middle Level Task Force makes the following recommendations.

Task Force Recommendations

1. Collaborative strategies and programs identified by the Indiana Legislative Services Agency and the programs and services offered by the restructured departments of Health and Human Services should be studied by the Adolescent Advisory Board (AAB) to appraise their suitability for addressing young adolescent problems and needs in Hoosier communities and middle schools. The AAB is an extension of the Indiana Middle Level Task Force.

2. Upon completion of this study, the AAB will make recommendations to establish and/or maintain programs which coordinate and supply services for Hoosier middle level students and their families.

3. A catalog or directory of programs suitable for use by Hoosier schools and agencies should be compiled and provided to middle level schools and others who may request it. This should include annotations and contact persons and be an interagency collaborative effort led by the Student Services Unit of the Indiana Department of Education.

4. Networking of agencies with services for young adolescents should be encouraged through conferences, professional associations, workshops, electronic modes, newsletters, and directories.

School as a Health-Promoting Environment: Providing Access to Coordinated Social and Health–Care Services

It has become increasingly apparent that our schools must face the challenge of meeting the physical and emotional, as well as academic, needs of children. Because more and more students are coming to school with unmet health and social problems, the schools must become equipped to ensure student access to appropriate services. The high-risk population of children can best be served when the school is established as a health-promoting environment that collaboratively provides services not only to students, but to their families, as well. The middle level school can be a naturally accessible, comfortable environment providing such services through a school-based or school-linked clinic. Schools can become community centers, providing services for children and their families.

There is a need in Indiana to integrate and expand children's services. This is being done to some extent by legislation effective July 1, 1991, that combines a number of state agencies under a Department of Family and Social Services with a children's division. Additional financial support for children's services is required to meet increasing need.

Currently in Indiana, there are only three school-based clinics. These are located in high schools in Gary, East Chicago, and Indianapolis, and are funded through the Indiana State Board of Health and private funding sources. There are currently no school-based clinics available in Indiana at the middle school level; however, one will be in operation during the 1991-1992 school year at H. L. Harshman School 101 of Indianapolis Public Schools.

Education must join forces with social services to address the complex needs of children and families. An effective way of facilitating this collaboration, is by providing access to these services in the school setting. Policy changes at both the state and local levels are needed to make school facilities accessible beyond the school day.

The Indiana Legislative Services Agency reports the following facts affecting the health of middle level children in Indiana:*

In 1987 –

- an estimated 259,000 of 1,470,000 – approximately 18 percent – of children under age 18 were living in poverty;
- 57 percent of married women with children under age 6 were employed outside the home;
- only 37 percent of Hoosier families eligible for federal housing assistance actually received it.

In 1989 –

- the Indiana Department of Public Welfare received 39,546 reports of child abuse or neglect;
- 26.3 percent of Indiana's children dropped out of school.

*The full evaluation audit report entitled *Senior Citizens, The Disabled, and Children in Indiana: Children with Special Needs,* June 1990, is available from the Legislative Services Agency.

Task Force Recommendations

I. School-based or school-linked service clinics

1. The Indiana State Board of Education must support the development of school-based service centers that provide comprehensive and accessible health services for adolescents in all Indiana middle schools. The emphasis of these centers must be on preventive health care.

2. Appropriate legislation must be enacted to enable the development of these centers.

3. Health, dental, and counseling services must be accessible for middle school families with flexible hours and convenient locations or available transportation when needed. Two ways to facilitate this important linkage are a health services coordinator at the building level or an on-site health facility staffed by health–care professionals on a permanent or part-time basis. (See Arsenal Technical High School or H.L. Harshman School 101 as examples of such programs.)

4. School health insurance, in addition to accident insurance, should be made available for middle school students.

5. Abstinence should be established as the preferred safe sex policy in middle schools. However, given the fact that large percentages of middle schoolers engage in sexual activity, become pregnant, and have reported sexually transmitted diseases, it is important that schools address all health concerns including birth control and the prevention of disease, by making information and resources available.

II. Information access and availability

1. A concerted effort must be made to inform all sectors of the unique adolescent development and health care needs.

2. Staff development is needed to assist school professionals in identifying appropriate resources and ways to access these resources. Such training can be provided by the social services agencies.

3. Parenting programs should be provided to help families understand and deal with preadolescence and discipline issues in order to identify appropriate behaviors.

4. Health information about developmental questions posed by students should be made available in the form of publications and other resources in all middle schools.

III. School as a supportive environment

1. As community centers, schools can provide not only coordinated health services, but enrichment and recreation opportunities and a safe environment for neighborhood children beyond school hours.

2. Vending machines and in-school concession areas should make available nutritious items for snacks and mealtimes.

3. School lunch programs should be nutritionally sound with the elimination of excessive white flour, sugars, and fats.

"Young adolescents need group approaches to learning. Learning often takes place best when students have opportunities to discuss, analyze, express opinions, and receive feedback from peers. Peer involvement is especially critical during early adolescence when the influence of peers increases and becomes more important to the young person."

– *Turning Points*, p. 43

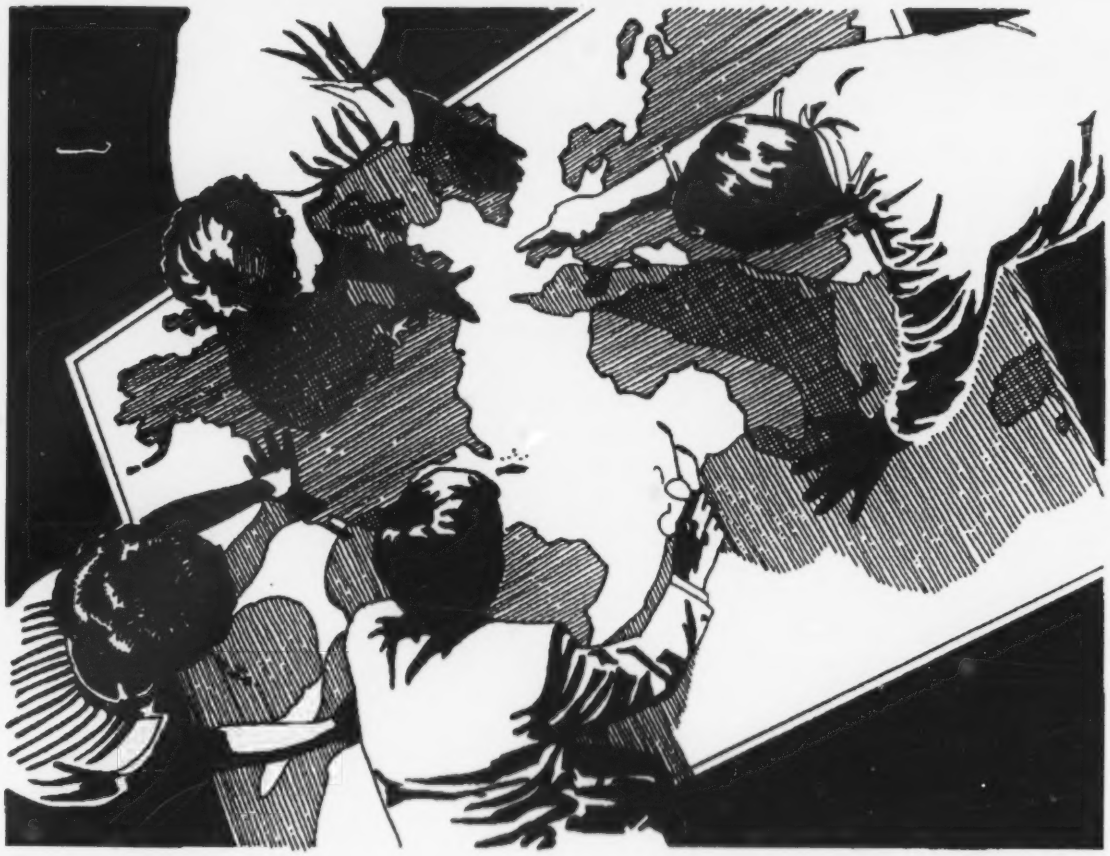
4. Middle school buildings and grounds are to be smoke and drug free at all times.

5. Corporal punishment should be eliminated as a method of student discipline.

6. Preadolescent social, emotional, physical, and safety issues should be dealt with in the curriculum.

A model strategy for health education must include the following:

- integrating health education into school environments that are health promoting;
- integrating health education into the core instructional program;
- training in the so-called life skills that help adolescents to resist interpersonal or media messages to engage in specific negative behaviors, increase self-control and self-esteem, reduce stress and anxiety, gain in the ability to express apprehension and disapproval, and become assertive; and
- equal access to school activities and learning should not be restricted by race, gender, creed, religion, ability, or national origin.



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Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum for the Middle Level

Three decades of middle school reform have resulted in a vast amount of research recognizing the need for change in the middle school curriculum. However, as James Beane confirms in his revolutionary publication, *A Middle School Curriculum, from Rhetoric to Reality*, "despite all of the progress that has been made within the movement, it has yet to include a compelling, coherent, and broadly conceived conception of what the middle school curriculum ought to be." While many schools for young adolescents have made changes in their organization and structure, few schools have made effective changes in their curricula.

Overwhelmingly, research confirms that the middle level curriculum must be based on the needs and interests of the early adolescent. Research also confirms that this is not what we are presently doing. Developmentally appropriate curriculum requires a "whole-child" approach to learning that is thematic, integrated, authentic, and outcome based in nature. Additionally, such a holistic approach to curriculum must include addressing the affective, as well as academic, needs of young adolescents.

By becoming thematic or integrated, the curriculum is no longer a collection of separate, unrelated subjects. Rather, information traditionally categorized into subjects is used as it relates to the study of more global issues and concepts. By becoming authentic, the middle level curriculum relates directly to the real world and the lives of young adolescents now, not always just in the distant future of college, work, or adulthood. By becoming outcome based, the curriculum determines long-range goals or proficiencies for student achievement and, then, provides a variety of experiences enabling all students to successfully reach those goals.

The task force supports the *Turning Points* vision of a successful young adolescent as one who is intellectually reflective, enroute to a lifetime of meaningful work, a good citizen, a caring and ethical individual, and a healthy person. To realize this vision, middle school curriculum must emphasize more than the memorization of facts within the traditional subject areas. The middle school must emphasize the learning process; the gathering, connecting, evaluating, and using of information. Middle school curriculum must emphasize the broader picture of how all content and skills learned is related and used in daily life.

"If we are trying to devise a means of driving students out of school, we obviously are succeeding. Recent estimates suggest that, nationally, 25 percent of students drop out every year and in urban areas as many as 40 percent. Something is very wrong. A common concern of students is the irrelevance of their course work in their lives out of school."

—Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation

Task Force Recommendations

1. Middle school curriculum must be developed on the basis of integrating all disciplines through interdisciplinary or thematic lessons.

2. The larger school student body should be divided into several "houses" of teachers and students. Teachers within each "house" should represent a rich variety of area expertise; thus, creating an interdisciplinary team to engage integrated lessons. Team planning time must be made available, as well as individual teacher planning time.

3. For middle school curriculum to address fully the physical, cognitive, and affective needs of its students, exploratory activities, such as clubs and intramurals, must be included. Additionally, subjects that have traditionally had "second class" status, such as the fine and practical arts, foreign language, industrial technology, health and physical education, and enrichment experiences, must be on equal footing throughout the curriculum with the traditional "core" subjects of language arts, social studies, math, and science.

4. Flexible or block scheduling is required to fully engage an integrated curriculum. State policy must eliminate the subject matter time requirements.

5. The Performance–Based Accreditation (PBA) process must encourage the redesigning of individual school curriculum. Each local community must determine its own curriculum by setting outcome–based goals for its students through site-based management.

6. All classrooms must be centers of active, hands-on learning. A variety of instructional methods should be used emphasizing critical thinking, problem solving, and cooperative learning.

7. A successful middle school curriculum requires teachers who are committed to middle school methods and philosophy. Proper licensing, preservice preparation, and inservice staff development are required.

8. Middle level curriculum must provide for student empowerment. Students must be provided opportunities for input on matters important to their school lives. Appropriate activities would be student council, citizenship, and community programs that stress student responsibility and invite students to put their "personal signature" on the school and the community.

"Life and learning consist of a continuous flow of experiences around situations that require problem solving in both large and small ways. When we encounter life situations or problems, we do not ask, 'which part is science, which is mathematics, which is history, and so on?' Rather, we use whatever information or skills the situation itself calls for, and we integrate these in problem solving. Certainly, such information and skills may often be found within subject areas, but in real life the problem itself is at the center, and the information and skills are defined around the problem. In other words, the subject approach is alien to life itself. Put simply, it is 'bad' learning theory."

– James Beane, *A Middle School Curriculum, From Rhetoric to Reality*

A Recent Curriculum Proposal

As this monograph went to press, revisions to the state policy requirements for middle school/junior high curriculum were proposed to the Indiana State Board of Education. These revisions have been written collaboratively by several divisions within the Indiana Department of Education (see next page).

The curriculum subcommittee of the Indiana Middle Level Task Force has reviewed this proposal. While the revisions still cling to a separate subject approach, the changes proposed do make possible movement toward the Task Force vision for middle level curriculum by providing for the following:

- elimination of subject matter time requirements
- mandated recognition and requirement of integrated interdisciplinary learning within a team setting
- integration of learning technology throughout the curriculum
- subject area descriptions that are consistent with proficiencies, listing desired student behaviors as outcomes
- addition of an advisor/advisee program within the curriculum
- mandated team planning time in addition to individual planning time
- inclusion of exploratory experiences as integral parts of the curriculum, rather than as extras or "add-ons"
- promotion of the philosophy that curriculum is everything offered by schools for students

The task force urges schools and the Indiana State Board of Education to fully implement these changes and to continue to seek a fully integrated middle school curriculum that does not reflect the separate subject approach.

Proposed middle level curriculum changes to the Indiana Adopted Code (IAC) from the Center for School Improvement and Performance, Indiana Department of Education, to the Indiana State Board of Education, spring 1992.

SECTION 4. Replace **511 IAC 6.1-3-3** and **511 IAC 6.1-5-3** with a new section **511 IAC 6.1-5-3.5** which reads:

511 IAC 6.1-5-3.5 Middle level curriculum

Sec. 3. (a) In each Grade 7 and 8, or each Grade 6 through 8 in middle schools which include Grade 6, the middle level curriculum shall include a balance of interdisciplinary learning experiences appropriate for the developmental characteristics of young adolescents, provided in a team setting. These learning experiences should develop competency in gathering, using, and evaluating information and ideas in a technology-rich environment and be consistent with the general principles in **511 IAC 6.1-5-0.5 [511 IAC 6-1-2.1]** in each of the following areas:

(1) Language arts: The middle school language arts program shall provide an integrated study of literature, media, reading and writing processes, oral communications, and language, including grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling as tools of effective communication. The language experiences provided will enable students to become proficient language users – readers, writers, listeners, speakers, and thinkers.

(2) Mathematics: The middle school mathematics program shall provide active learning experiences through which students are allowed to discover mathematical relationships; come to appreciate the power and utility of mathematics; acquire the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary for using mathematics in their lives; and have opportunities to apply their acquired understanding to more complex situations and the solution of real problems.

(3) Social studies/citizenship: The middle school social studies program shall provide opportunities for students to actively acquire and use thinking skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for participatory

citizenship. These experiences shall be provided through a balanced study of history, geography, economics, world cultures, law, and citizen responsibilities in a democratic society.

(4) Science: The middle school science program shall provide hands-on learning opportunities through which students become adept in using the sciencing skills, processes, and attitudes to develop an understanding of the structure of the universe, the physical principles on which it seems to run, the living environment, the human organism, and the designed world. This understanding must go beyond the verbalization of principles and the schematic representation of structures "on cue" to the development of a familiarity that prompts their application as they are germane to personal or societal issues.

(5) Fine arts: The middle school fine arts program shall meet the students' needs for aesthetic enrichment and the development of their artistic and musical talents and abilities. Diverse options based on the students' needs shall include group and individual instruction, as well as laboratory experiences in music, visual arts, drama, and dance.

(A) The visual arts curriculum should continue to develop the knowledge, concepts, and perceptual and technical skills in the areas of art history, criticism, aesthetics, and production. Learning experiences should use two and three dimensional media to increase the students' knowledge of the elements of arts, enhance their ability to make informed judgments and solve problems creatively, and appreciate art.

(B) The music curriculum shall provide students with experiences in listening, performing, creating, and movement. It shall also include the study of the structural elements of music and continue to build perceptual and technical skills and concepts that will enhance the students' ability to perform, make informed judgments, be critical listeners, and appreciate music.

(C) The theatre arts curriculum shall be designed to help students acquire knowledge and understanding of the elements of drama; to explore personal expression through movement, voice, and language; to make informed judgments; and to develop technical skills in the areas of theatre production and performance.

(6) Practical arts/industrial technology education: The middle school practical education program should provide experiences in the areas of agribusiness, business, home economics, and industrial technology through which students recognize technological systems and developments; use them to solve problems related to the home, school, community, and workplace; become aware of the possibilities and limitations of technology; develop skills in managing individual and family responsibilities; and assess personal interests and aptitudes in relation to various career opportunities.

(7) Health education: The middle school health education program shall provide for the coordinated development of knowledge, concepts, skills, and behaviors related to students' present and future health and well-being in the areas of growth and development, mental and emotional health, community and environmental health, nutrition, family life education, consumer health, personal health, alcohol and other drugs, unintenional/intentional injury, and health promotion and disease prevention.

(8) Physical education: The middle school physical education program shall provide students opportunities to develop and use knowledge and skills in the areas of aerobic endurance, body composition, flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance. Experiences shall also be provided through which students develop and refine fundamental techniques of movement in rhythmic, lifetime recreational and fitness activities. All students should have opportunities to practice these skills in intramural activities.

(9) Advisor/Advisee program: The middle school advisor/advisee program shall provide students regular, supportive counsel from a concerned adult about the students' academic program, as well as school and personal adjustment.

(b) Schools shall maintain instructional programs that provide all students with opportunities to acquire proficiencies in each curriculum area specific in subsection (a). In establishing these proficiencies, schools shall

refer to the educational proficiency statements developed under **IAC 20-10.1-16-6.**

(c) Middle level students should be provided exploratory experiences, such as:

(1) Career explorations which continue to support a positive attitude toward work and the development of transition skills needed for life and career adjustments. These explorations should include opportunities to understand the relationship between personal qualities and work; to focus on making decisions, setting goals, and taking action; to explore careers and lifestyle planning; to learn how to use leisure time; and to understand how community awareness relates to work.

(2) Community service activities that provide students opportunities to apply curriculum-based knowledge in experiential settings through the fulfillment of unmet community needs. These experiences should include structured opportunities for reflection that help students understand the impact and importance of their efforts, as well as the educational benefits to themselves.

(3) Foreign language education that provides students with the ability to communicate in languages other than their own and develop an in-depth understanding of cultures where those languages are spoken.

(4) International education that provides the study of specific societies, languages, and world issues cutting across traditional disciplines to include the perspectives of the natural and social sciences, technology, and the humanities.

(5) Enrichment experiences, such as activity periods, clubs, and interest groups that provide learning opportunities to satisfy a wide range of interests, develop social skills, and practice leadership roles.

(d) Schools that include Grade 9 shall organize their schedule for Grade 9 to meet the curriculum provisions of **511 IAC 6.1-3-4** and **511 IAC 6.1-5-4.**

Resources

Beane, James A. *A Middle School Curriculum, From Rhetoric to Reality*. Columbus: National Middle School Association, 1990.

Fusco, Esther, et al. *Cognitive Matched Instruction in Action*. Columbus: National Middle School Association, 1987.

Jacobs, Heidi Hayes. *Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1989.

Merenbloom, Elliot. *The Team Process in the Middle School: A Handbook for Teachers*. Columbus: National Middle School Association, 1986.

Curriculum Resources: Textbooks and Beyond

For students to learn to think critically and to integrate subject matter across disciplines, a wide variety of timely learning resources are needed. Without access to a diversity of texts and other media resources, students lack the basic tools to stimulate the development of inquisitive, disciplined minds.

Traditionally, much educational practice at the middle level has centered each separate subject matter class around one adopted textbook and/or workbook. Inherent in this practice is an over-reliance by many educators on commercially prepared material. Research on middle level education, however, confirms that such separate subject, textbook-driven approaches are not appropriate for middle level students.

The belief that teaching is telling and learning is memorizing is not acceptable. Middle level students require a curriculum that actively engages them, both mentally and physically, in problem-solving that is creative, critical, interdisciplinary, and relevant to their own present and future lives. Such a curriculum places a textbook not at the center of instruction, but at the periphery as just one of many resources.

The Indiana Middle Level Task Force has made a study of curriculum resource acquisition and use at the middle level in Indiana. This study included textbook adoption and library materials acquisition. The following problems were identified:

- While the current textbook selection process is advantageous in that it ensures stable pricing and guarantees sufficient availability of texts, the process holds potential for abuse in that the power to approve or disapprove textbooks rests with a small number (seven total) of people.
- Despite the economy of scale the current textbook adoption system affords, Indiana ranked on average only 38th in the nation in funds expended for textbooks during the six-year period 1983-1989 (Association of American Publishers Industry Statistics).
- The recommended national average for library acquisitions is two books per student per year; Indiana schools on average purchase only one-half library book per student per year (American Association of School Librarians and the American Library Association).
- All library materials, including books, media and media equipment, computer hardware and software, globes, maps, and other resource materials, are on the same budget line as the salary and benefits of all library personnel. An increase in personnel costs may be afforded only at the loss of additional resource materials and vice versa, creating an inappropriate trade-off.
- On average, Indiana's school libraries do not have timely resources; 75 percent of books were purchased before 1981 (Association for Indiana Media Educators).

Task Force Recommendations

1. State policy defining curriculum resources must be broadened to include materials other than textbooks.

2. The Indiana Department of Education textbook consultant should facilitate a learning resource committee that identifies materials appropriate to each level of learner in Indiana's schools; among these would be clearly identified middle school materials that are developmentally appropriate to young adolescents.

3. Guidelines and recommendations for resource materials at the middle level should be made available to parents and communities through newspaper publication.

4. The Performance-Based Accreditation (PBA) process should identify, assess, and recommend appropriate learning materials for the middle level.

5. The waiver format and process for alternative learning resources should be simplified and promoted by the Indiana Department of Education.

6. Workshops on textbook selection and "holistic" resource strategies should be provided across the state by the Indiana Department of Education.

7. The seven-member textbook adoption committee should be eliminated. The textbook adoption list should be based upon recommendations of individual reviewers across the state. Currently, textbooks are reviewed by professionals, parents, and community members at several statewide review sites. This process should be promoted and expanded through data base applications to create the textbook adoption list.

8. Dedicated funds for resource purchases should be utilized and accounted for within separate budget categories and line items. Specifically, resource personnel (librarians and aides) should be on a budget line separate from materials; library books should be on a line separate from alternative materials.

9. Middle school libraries should be inventoried and collections purged according to uniform national standards governing publication date and circulation cycle. These standards are outlined in *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (1988) available from the Indiana Department of Education.

10. The Indiana State Board of Education should amend and upgrade standards concerning library acquisition and require a minimum purchase of two books per student per year.

Success for All Students: Elimination of Tracking at the Middle Level

Tracking, the inflexible grouping of students by ability as determined most often by standardized testing, is widely practiced and has been for many decades. Throughout this century, such ability grouping has become one of the most studied educational practices. Research indicates that tracking is not educationally sound for a majority of students nor does it provide for equal educational opportunities (Slavin, 1987; Oakes, 1990). While specific research on heterogeneous grouping and the profoundly gifted student (approximately 2-5 percent of the student population) is minimal, this Task Force maintains that tracking is harmful educationally and emotionally to most middle level students.

For young adolescents to become successful adults, the middle years must provide educational opportunities for building durable self-esteem, flexible and inquiring learning habits, reliable relationships, and goals for lifelong learning. Taking a child at such a malleable time in life and setting an expected level of achievement based on ability group expectations does not provide for individual needs. Even for those selected for the highest track, the rigid expectations and group assumptions do not lead to what is best for the individual student.

"While most people (including many educators) assume that students will learn better if they are grouped together with those who have similar capabilities, research has shown that putting children into separate classes to accommodate their differences from their earliest school years is neither necessary nor very effective. Tracking does not work well for students in the low- and middle-ability groups, who experience clear and consistent learning disadvantages. Perhaps more surprising, tracking does not necessarily promote achievement for high-ability children either . . . many studies show that highly capable students do as well in mixed-ability classes" (Oakes, 1990).

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Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force recommends that tracking, inflexible ability grouping, be eliminated during the middle school years. Any type of student grouping must allow for frequent reevaluation and regrouping opportunities. Life outside of school requires the ability to work with people of diverse abilities; school is a microcosm of our society and should reflect this diversity.

1. If students are grouped, such groups should be frequently regrouped to ensure interaction with students of all abilities throughout the entire curriculum.

2. It must be acknowledged that no grouping arrangement is truly homogeneous. Wide variations occur in all groups; thus, the expectation that a group of students will perform at the same ability level is unrealistic. Attention to the needs of individual students is paramount to good instruction.

3. For any type of grouped instruction, teachers must first define the task to be accomplished, determine the prerequisites for completing the task and, then, devise a form of assessment for selection of group members. The task dictates the assessment format – and this format most frequently will not be a standardized test. Alternatives to standardized testing might include portfolios, narratives, criteria checklists, hands-on or performance assessment, or creative projects.

4. Groups should be developed by using a variety of configurations, such as common interests, diverse and similar talents to engage peer tutoring and cooperative learning, random selection, and student self-selection. The task to be performed determines the group configuration.

5. Frequent grouping and regrouping into a continual variety of configurations promotes individual growth by validating the importance of each student and mimicking the diversity of the real world.

6. Workshops on alternatives to tracking should be undertaken by the Indiana Department of Education in cooperation with the Indiana Middle School Association.

7. Federal and state funding is available each year for Chapter 1, special education, and gifted/talented programs. These funds should be used to help those students properly identified as having special needs **within** the regular classroom. We advocate this funding be used for supplementary programs, rather than for pull-out programs.

> "More than any other country in the world, the United States believes that natural ability, rather than effort, explains achievement. The tragedy is that we communicate to millions of students every year, especially to low-income and minority students, that we do not believe that they have what it takes to learn. They then live up to our expectations, despite the evidence that they can meet very high performance standards under the right conditions."
>
> – *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!,* The Report of The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, National Center on Education and the Economy

A survey of Indiana's middle level schools in 1989 performed by the Indiana Middle Level Task Force indicates that in nearly two-thirds of the schools, students are tracked in varying degrees. For the majority of middle level students, that language of ability grouping – for example, "gifted and talented," "remedial," "learning disabled," "average" – compartmentalizes these students caste structure within the school. Presumably, this grouping is to meet cognitive needs, as well as to help students feel more comfortable with themselves and school by placing them "with their own kind," but often it has the opposite effect. It causes students to be stigmatized and to experience artificially lowered or heightened expectations based on a group label and not on individual need. All-day pull-out programs are predicated on the mistaken notion that one is talented, average, or remedial equally across disciplines.

The young adolescent years are years of major psychological and biological change. Dramatic changes in today's society complicate the lives of young people to a greater degree than those of previous generations. Today's students are more "at risk" than ever before. To take a simplistic approach to such complexity by determining on the basis of standardized testing or previous academic achievement the ability group of a student is detrimental to the academic, social, and emotional health of that student during these critical years. Often this growth is uneven within and among middle level learners (Smart and Smart, 1973; Piaget, 1977). At a time when their abilities are rapidly changing, definitive labeling and group placement that limits opportunities and expectations is harmful to students.

Research shows that the teaching strategies and quality content developed for students in the highest track would be educationally sound for all students. Frequently, the programs developed for students in the lower tracks are dull, repetitive, and lead to ever increasing gaps between what the students are learning and the level of achievement expected by the next educational tier (Allington, 1987; Lewis, 1990). Falling further behind each year, the young middle schooler in the lower tracks moves closer and closer to dropping out. Even if this student does not drop out of school, the skills attained may be so inadequate, and the emotional damage so severe, that postsecondary education and employment opportunities are drastically reduced (The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990).

A Process for Educational Equity: How to Untrack a School

The decision to eliminate the practice of ability grouping requires dedicated vision and leadership from school administration. This might best be done at the school level and not on a district-wide basis. Professional educators at the building level are uniquely qualified to evaluate individual student needs in a specific school building. Staff development and community forums addressing flexible grouping and alternatives to tracking are advised. The following steps were outlined by Principal Dennis L. Evans in *Educational Leadership*, May 1991.

1. The process to untrack a school begins with a comprehensive study of the current status of ability grouping at the school. This study should include a history of the practice, the types of tracks used, the demographic data on the type of student who makes up the various tracks, and an understanding of how teachers are assigned to teach in a specific track.

   This first step requires dedication on the part of administration and faculty. It requires facing a number of realities about the current structure of day-to-day operations in the school. This will not be an easy task to undertake or a task without some confrontation. But an honest and forthright assessment of the current status of tracking and ability grouping is critical to the success of any attempt to restructure and

must be undertaken with participation by all with vested interests.

2. Once the current status of ability grouping in the school is determined, the second step should be a thorough review of the current research on tracking. It is possible for steps one and two to take place concurrently with teams of teachers working on respective problems.

   In schools where this research review has taken place with success, an understanding has been reached with all teachers that they will read a selected number of articles about tracking. A frank discussion about ability grouping should follow this period of research.

3. Following the evaluation and research phases, restructuring discussion can begin to determine how the school will make changes. The design of the program of change may include: cooperative learning environments; grouping and regrouping techniques, such as peer and cross-age tutoring or coaching; or a variety of other options. Any of these options are delineated in current research on alternatives to tracking.

4. A most important factor in this process is the time for staff development. Without a commitment from administration and teachers to devote time and energy to this process, real change is difficult.

> "The practice of grouping students by ability for instructional purposes is not supported by research. Even though a majority of teachers believe that ability grouping improves the effectiveness of schooling, the studies reviewed suggest that the practice has deleterious effects on teacher expectations and instructional practices (especially for lower ability grouped students), student perceptions of self and others, and academic performance of lower ability students. It interferes with opportunities for students to learn from – and learn to accept – peers of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and may perpetuate notions of superior and inferior classes of citizens. The practice is especially antithetical to the goals and objectives of the middle school."
>
> – *What Research Says to the Middle Level Practitioner*,
> J. Howard Johnston and Glenn C. Markle, 1986

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"One of my favorite teachers was a substitute teacher. I would see him in the hallway, and he would always take the time to say hi and talk to me. Then when I would have him in class, he would always take time out to get to know the students, to help them if they needed anything. He would always take time to care. If you ever had a problem, you knew you could always go to him. He had an impact on my life because he helped me see things I would never have seen before. He was just a good person. I wish all teachers were like that."

— ninth grader

Characteristics of a Middle Level Teacher

The restructured middle school requires a professional educator with a commitment to innovation; a willingness to work cooperatively with peers, adolescents, and the community; and a desire to continue to learn and improve the art of teaching. The following are goals appropriate for the middle level teacher:

- a middle level license
- college coursework specifically covering young adolescent development, middle level curriculum and instructional methods, and the structure and organization of middle level schools
- a sensitivity to and understanding of the characteristics of early adolescents
- a commitment to ongoing professional development that includes Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA), 4MAT, Learning Styles, Cooperative Learning, Interdisciplinary Teaching, and Interdisciplinary Teaming
- ability to articulate the integration of middle school theory into practice
- willingness and ability to work in a cooperative team
- willingness and ability to relate and work with parents
- creative excitement for particular subject area discipline(s), and its relationship to other subject areas
- ability to understand and use different management techniques
- experience with a variety of assessment techniques
- membership in the state and national middle school associations

Preparation and Certification of Middle Level Professionals

Both preparation and licensing for middle level education must be unique for those professionals – teachers, counselors, and administrators – who work with young adolescents. Recognition of middle level learners as a unique group requires unique training of those who will educate that group.

Currently, Indiana's licensing rules contain too many "loop holes" that allow for omission of middle school issues from teacher education programs. Additionally, while standards exist for graduate programs in elementary and secondary education, no such standards exist at the graduate level for appropriate preparation of middle level teachers, administrators, and counselors. These situations are fundamental barriers to good preparation of middle level professionals in Indiana.

Teachers, administrators, and counselors of middle level students must be prepared with an understanding of the needs and characteristics of young adolescents and the school organization, curriculum, and methods appropriate to meeting those needs. Additionally, middle level professionals should expect to be lifelong learners about the young adolescents they work with and about programs developed for early adolescent welfare.

Task Force Recommendations

1. A statewide network should be formed of university educators who develop and teach coursework for the preparation of middle level teachers to better inform and promote middle school philosophy.

2. The Teacher Training and Licensing Advisory Committee should recommend that the Indiana State Board of Education approve license rules for middle level administrators and counselors. The Indiana State Board of Education should recommend such changes in licensing to the legislature.

3. The Teacher Training and Licensing Advisory Committee should recommend to the State Board of Education that it approve the revision of the rule governing continuing education hours for staff development and continued licensing to require that at least three of the six hours required for the initial five-year renewal for all educators teaching at the middle level be taken in professional middle level education. Appropriate inservice might also be suggested as a way to achieve the necessary continuing education. The Indiana State Board of Education should recommend this rule change to the legislature.

4. The Teacher Training and Licensing Advisory Committee should recommend to the Indiana State Board of Education the requirement that existing preparation standards for the middle level teaching programs be amended to more closely follow those detailed by the National Middle School Association. These standards were prepared for and accepted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Indiana program preparation standards for middle level teacher education should also follow closely the NCATE middle level standards endorsed by the national discipline area professional groups.

5. The Teacher Training and Licensing Advisory Committee should approve appropriate teacher preparation standards for graduate level programs in teacher education and for programs which prepare administrators and counselors for the middle level. Graduate level teacher preparation standards should follow closely the standards written by the National Middle School Association.

6. While the existing 5-12 and 5-9 licensing patterns, and the middle level endorsements to elementary and secondary licenses, should be investigated further by the Adolescent Advisory Board or the Middle Level Higher Education Network. The appropriate revisions should be made to reflect quality middle level teacher preparation. In addition, the Teacher Training and Licensing Advisory Council should recommend the creation of an endorsement pattern to the separate 5-9 license for secondary education (see following pages).

Existing and Proposed Preparation Standards for Middle Level Educators

CURRENT	PROPOSED
511 IAC 10-1-4 a Junior high/middle school education license	**Junior high/middle school license**
Professional Education – 27 semester hours	Professional Education – 27 semester hours
(i) Foundations of education – This shall develop the basis of the present educational system, the nature of its social impact and future implications as seen through historical, sociological, and philosophical foundations of education.	same
(ii) Educational psychology – This shall introduce the student to the field of psychology and include study of the learner as a growing and developing individual from childhood to early adolescence, with educational implications.	(ii) Educational psychology – This shall introduce the student to the field of psychology and the study of the adolescent learner as a growing and developing individual from childhood to early adolescence, with education implications.
(iii) General methodology and organization – This shall develop knowledge about teaching process, including general methods, instructional media, measurement, curriculum, development and organization of the middle, intermediate and/or junior high school, and always including techniques to promote individualized and interdisciplinary learning.	same
(iv) Special methods – This shall emphasize instructional processes appropriate for the age level covered by this license.	(iv) Special methods – This shall address instructional processes appropriate for the age level covered by this license and should also emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the middle grades curriculum.
(v) Sociology of education – Ethnic, cultural, and disability awareness.	same
(vi) Classroom management – This shall develop understanding of legal rights and responsibilities of student and classroom teacher and human relations skills necessary for effective teaching.	same
(vii) Reading – This shall develop understanding of reading problems encountered by students of this age level in subject-matter oriented materials (three (3) semester hours).	same
(viii) Laboratory experiences – Specific and continuing prestudent teaching field experiences beginning as early as possible in the teacher preparation program.	(viii) Laboratory experiences – Specific and continuing prestudent teaching field experiences integrated with (but not limited to) general and special methods courses.
(ix) Student teaching – A minimum of nine (9) weeks of full-time student teaching in a junior high and/or middle school.	(ix) Student teaching – A minimum of ten (10) weeks of full-time student teaching in a junior high and/or middle school.
Renewal: The standard license in junior high/middle school education may be renewed as specified in **530 IAC 2-3 (511 IAC 10-3-1, 511 IAC 10-3-4).**	same

Professionalization: The standard license in junior high/middle school education may be professionalized when the holder has:	same
(1) Completed five (5) years of teaching experience in accredited schools at the level covered by the license and subsequent to the issuance of the standard license.	same
(2) Completed an appropriate master's degree from an institution regionally accredited to offer graduate degree.	same
(3) Completed six (6) semester hours of professional education at the graduate level at an institution regionally accredited to offer graduate programs in professional education.	same
(4) Completed appropriate coursework in the primary and/or supporting area(s).	same
(A) Professionalization of the primary area requires the completion of six (6) semester hours of graduate coursework in the primary area. Such coursework must be completed to offer graduate programs in the primary area.	same
(B) Professionalization of the supporting area requires the completion of twelve (12) semester hours of coursework in the supporting area of which six (6) semester hours must be at the graduate level. Graduate coursework must be completed at an institution regionally accredited to offer graduate programs in the supporting area. (Note: Candidates with additional teaching areas or endorsements should refer to 530 IAC 2-1-13 [511 IAC 10-1-8] for specific professionalization requirements for these areas.)	same
511 IAC 10-1-3.5 Junior high/middle school endorsement	**Junior high/middle school endorsement to the Elementary License**
Sec. 3.5 (a) Candidates who hold a standard or professional license in elementary education qualify for a junior high/middle school endorsement when they have completed 24 semester hours of coursework as follows:	**(a) Candidates who hold a standard license in elementary education license in elementary education qualify for a junior high/middle school school endorsement when they have completed 24 semester hours of coursework as follows:**
(1) eighteen (18) semester hours in desired subject area; and	same
(2) six (6) semester hours of appropriate professional education at the junior high/middle school level including a practicum.	**(2) six (6) semester hours of appropriate professional education in junior high/middle school education to include adolescent psychology, curriculum, organization, and methods of teaching in the middle school.**
(b) Coverage: The holder of the junior high/middle school endorsement is eligible to teach the particular subject area at the junior high/middle school level.	same

(c) Professionalization: This endorsement may be professionalized when the candidate has completed three (3) semester hours in the particular subject area and has met the professionalization requirements for the basic preparation level of the standard license.	(c) Professionalization: The endorsement may be professionalized when the candidate has completed three (3) semester hours in junior high/middle school education and has met the requirements for professionalizing the basic preparation level of the standard license.
(d) Candidates who hold a standard or professional license in elementary education qualify for a junior high/middle school endorsement when they have completed:	(d) Candidates who hold a standard license in elementary education qualify for a junior high/middle endorsement when they have completed:
(1) the equivalent of one (1) semester full-time teaching experience at the junior high/middle school level prior to July 1, 1989; and	same
(2) eighteen (18) semester hours of coursework in the desired subject area prior to September 1, 1991.	(2) eighteen (18) semester hours of coursework in the desired subject area.
511 IAC 10-1-5.5 Senior high, junior high, and middle school; standard education license	**Senior high-junior high/middle school license**
Professional education – 27 semester hours	Professional Education – 27 semester hours
(i) Foundations of education, which shall develop the basis of the present education system, the nature of its social impact and future implications as seen through historical, sociological, and philosophical foundations of education.	same
(ii) Educational psychology, which shall introduce the student to the field of psychology and include study of the learner as a growing and developing individual from early adolescence through adolescence.	(ii) Foundations of Middle Grades Education, which shall include an overview of adolescent psychology, curriculum/organization of the middle school, and general teaching methods for the middle grades.
(iii) General methodology and organization, which shall develop knowledge about the teaching process, including general methods, instructional media, measurement, curriculum development, and organization of the senior high, junior high, and middle school and techniques to promote individualized and interdisciplinary learning.	(iii) Educational psychology, same as (ii) to the left
(iv) Special methods, which shall emphasize the instructional processes appropriate for the age level covered by this license and the subject area of the student's major.	(iv) General methodology, same as (iii) to the left
(v) Sociology of education, which shall emphasize ethnic, cultural, and disability awareness.	(v) Special methods, same as (iv) to the left
(vi) Classroom management, which shall develop an understanding of legal rights and responsibilities of student and teacher, models and procedures for discipline, and human relations skills necessary for effective teaching.	(vi) Sociology of education, same as (v) to the left
(vii) Three (3) semester hours of reading, which shall develop an understanding of reading problems encountered by senior high, junior high, and middle school students in subject-matter oriented materials.	(vii) Classroom Management, same as (vi) to the left

(viii) Laboratory or field experiences, which shall include specific and continuing prestudent teaching field or laboratory experiences beginning as soon as possible in the teacher preparation program. Experience must be with the levels of senior high school and senior high school, and junior high/middle school.	(viii) Three (3) semester hours of reading, same as (vii) to the left
(ix) Student teaching, which must consist of a minimum of ten (10) weeks full-time student teaching at an accredited school at the senior high, junior high, or middle school level in the subject area.	(ix) Laboratory or field experiences, which shall include specific and continuing prestudent teaching field or laboratory experiences integrated with (but not limited to) general and special methods courses. Experience must be with the levels of junior high or middle school. (x) Student teaching, which must consist of a minimum of ten (10) weeks full-time student teaching at an accredited school at the senior high and junior high/middle school levels in the subject area.
Renewal: The standard license in senior high, junior high, and middle school may be renewed as specified in 511 IAC 10-3-1	Renewal: The standard senior high-junior high/middle school license may be renewed initially with six (6) semester hours of coursework (as specified in 511 IAC 10-3-1) including three (3) semester hours in junior high/middle school education. Subsequent renewals to be made in accordance with 511 IAC 10-3-1.
Professionalization: The standard license in senior high, junior high and middle school may be professionalized when the holder has:	Professionalization: same as at left
(1) Completed five (5) years of teaching experience in accredited schools at the level and in one or more areas on the license.	same
(2) Completed an appropriate master's degree from an institution accredited by the state or a regionally accrediting association to offer graduate degrees.	same
(3) Completed six (6) semester hours of professional education coursework at the graduate level at an institution accredited by the state or a regional accrediting association to offer graduate programs in education.	(3) Completed six (6) semester hours of graduate professional education coursework including three (3) semester hours in junior high/middle school education. Such coursework can be taken only through an institution accredited by the state or a regional accrediting association for the purpose of offering graduate programs in education.
(4) Completed appropriate coursework in the major, minor or endorsement areas. The coursework must be completed at an institution accredited by the state or a regional accrediting association to offer graduate programs in the area being professionalized. (Refer to certification patterns for specific requirements.)	same
(5) Been recommended for the professional license by the institution granting the master's degree.	same

Attention Principals: Quick and Easy Ideas for Staff Development to Promote Middle Level Philosophy

- use faculty meetings as inservice opportunities: assign or request volunteers to research middle level issues and, then, to report on these issues to the faculty
- use audio and/or video tapes, such as those from the National Middle School Association, to distribute among faculty on a loan basis or to use at a faculty meeting
- send one or two representatives to conferences or workshops and request that they report or lead an inservice for the faculty about what they learned
- involve parent groups by commissioning a resource guide of community members to volunteer for school presentations, workshops, substitute teaching, and/or mentoring
- plan an interdisciplinary unit of only one or two weeks duration that involves all faculty, subject areas, and school support staff
- create or upgrade a student council that will be more involved with faculty and staff in school decisions
- plan and implement a school-wide community service project
- invite principals and teachers from other schools to participate in a teacher exchange day or inservice workshops
- invite personnel from the Indiana Department of Education to make presentations or provide inservice with resource materials
- serve refreshments!

A Collaborative Model for Staff Development

An exciting opportunity for statewide middle level staff development is planned to begin during the spring of 1992. The program is a collaborative effort among the Indiana Middle School Association (IMSA), Lilly Endowment's Middle Grades Improvement Network (MGIP), and the Indiana Department of Education (DOE). Members of each organization will serve on a newly reorganized middle level task force, the Adolescent Advisory Board (AAB), to facilitate this collaboration.

As this monograph goes to press, IMSA has submitted a proposal to receive funding for a new "Indiana Middle Level Institute." The institute plans to provide an intensive summer session each year at a central site in Indianapolis and shorter sessions each fall and spring at various regional affiliate sites throughout the state. Concurrently, DOE has applied to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for funding to provide grants to a limited number of middle level schools to serve as affiliate sites.

The goal of the institute is to provide ongoing professional development for those who work with young adolescents. Topics will include the most recent middle level research, with an emphasis on teams of teachers and/or administrators creating actual programs to be used in their schools.

Information about the affiliate site grants from the Indiana Department of Education or the Indiana Middle Level Institute will be available during spring 1992. Please plan to get involved!

Contact:

Indiana Middle Level Task Force
Indiana Department of Education
Office of School Assistance
Room 229, State House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2798
(317) 232-9141

"Many parents, seeing that their child is developing in profound ways, mistake the stirring of independent thinking for the capacity to make adult decisions. They do not realize that their child's needs for autonomy require not rejection of filial bonds, but a realignment of roles and relationships within the family."

— *Turning Points*, p. 22

What Families Can Do to Help Their Young Adolescents Learn

Researcher Reginald Clark has developed a model for effective parent involvement within the schools. He has also identified eight parent-child interactions that can boost learning.

- engage frequently in intelligent discussions with your child on topics concerning school, education, careers, life skills, etiquette, rules, and expectations
- tell stories, recount experiences, and engage in problem solving together with your child
- provide encouragement for homework
- provide time, space, and materials your child needs for homework, reading, hobbies, and special interests
- listen to your child read, as well as read aloud to your child
- plan a reading time in which your child can observe you reading for pleasure, work, or self-improvement
- play games together
- introduce your child to other responsible mentors and programs for enrichment and new experiences

SOURCE: *Making it in the Middle, The How and Why of Excellent Schools for Young Urban Adolescents*. Anne C. Lewis, ed. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 1990.

Greater Community Involvement at the Middle Level

Traditionally there have been efforts on the part of concerned families to participate in policy decisions in their children's schools. Some of this has been done through channels, such as PTA/PTO (Parent-Teacher Association/Organization), while other involvement has been through smaller parent groups focusing on one or two issues or school programs.

Families can be very effective advocates for and contributors to school systems, including involvement as policy makers. However, there has been reluctance on the part of schools to give up control over program planning by including parents in policy decisions.

Schools must provide support to family systems by involving and promoting parents. Schools must operate on the basic assumption that parents love their children and want the best for them. Efforts must be made to keep all families informed and involved in providing the necessary services for their young adolescents. With family ownership will come support and advocacy.

"Despite the clearly documented benefits of parental involvement for students' achievement and attitudes toward school, parental involvement of all types declines progressively during the elementary school years. By middle grade school, the home-school connection has been significantly reduced, and in some cases is nonexistent."

— *Turning Points*, p. 66

Task Force Recommendations

1. Each school district should canvas the families in its district for recommendations for changes in current school practice, programs desired, and to identify what community support is available.

2. The Indiana State Board of Education should require "family" involvement on all policymaking committees, both state and local.

3. A catalog of community resources should be created by each school corporation that lists parents and community members willing to serve as mentors, volunteers, substitutes, guest speakers, and chaperons.

4. Individual middle schools, school corporations, and community members should seek business connections to create joint financial commitments and shared decision-making opportunities.

Ongoing Assessment of Middle Level Policy and Practice

In keeping with provisions of Public Law 390, the Indiana State Board of Education has established a Performance-Based Accreditation (PBA) system for schools in Indiana. It is the only accreditation system authorized by the board. Schools may be accorded full accreditation status by meeting three requirements:

(1) Complying with appropriate legal standards;

(2) Completing of a school improvement plan;

(3) Meeting expected performance levels on student outcomes.

Performance–Based Accreditation, through the Indiana Department of Education, offers an opportunity for middle schools to take a hard look at their policies and practices. This process allows for continual evaluation through intensive self-study. Additionally, this study should be the basis for school improvement council plans. It should not be a "once-in-five-years" exercise, but a continually self-correcting program.

Task Force Recommendations

1. All assessment and accreditation of middle schools should be addressed through PBA.

2. The characteristics of the Indiana Middle Level Task Force Vision, the "A + Middle Level School," should be integrated into the standards for accreditation.

3. PBA should use the ISTEP scores as only **one** of several criteria for assessment. Other criteria should include:

   - availability of curriculum resource materials as outlined by the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Middle Level Task Force
   - integrated curriculum that is appropriate to the developmental needs and characteristics of middle level students
   - accessibility and coordination of health care and social services provided to middle level students and their families
   - involvement of families and community within the middle school

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A Middle Level Resource Guide

California State Department of Education
Bureau of Publications, P O Box 271
Sacramento, California 95802-0271
(916) 445-1260

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development
11 Dupont Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 265-9080

Center for Early Adolescence
The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Suite 211, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, North Carolina 27510
(919) 966-1148

Center of Education for the Young Adolescent
University of Wisconsin
128 Doudna Hall
One University Plaza
Platteville, Wisconsin 53818-3099
(608) 342-1276

Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning
Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
(617) 353-3309

Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools
The Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Center for Human Resources
Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts 02254-9110
(617) 736-3774

Clark, Reginald
(research on minority parent involvement in schools)
P O Box 1346
Claremont, California 91711
(714) 626-0755

The Comer Model
(meaningful roles in schools for low-income parents)
Dr. James Comer, Director
School Development Program
Yale University Child Study Center
P O Box 3333
New Haven, Connecticut 06510
(203) 785-2548

Early Adolescent Connections, Inc.
(advisor/advisee programs)
P O Box 1844
St. Cloud, Minnesota 56302

Early Adolescent Helper Program and
National Center for Service Learning in Early Adolescence
Graduate Center, City University of New York
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036-8099
(212) 642-2947 or (212) 642-2946

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
250 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017
(212) 986-7050

Education Writers Association
(publishers of *High Strides*)
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036-5541
(202) 429-9680

Girls Incorporated of Indianapolis
3959 North Central Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46205
(317) 283-0086

Indiana Department of Education
Indiana Middle Level Task Force
Office of School Assistance
Room 229, State House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2798
(317) 232-9141

Indiana Middle School Association
Department of Educational Administration and Supervision
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana 47306

Indiana Youth Institute
333 North Alabama Street, Suite 200
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 633-4222 or (800) 343-7060

League of Schools Reaching Out
(parent involvement program)
Institute for Responsive Education
Boston University
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
(617) 353-3309

Middle Grades Improvement Network (MGIP)
8301 East 46th Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46226
(317) 543-3318

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091-1598
(703) 860-0200

National Center on Education and the Economy
39 State Street, Suite 500
Rochester, New York 14614
(716) 546-7620

National Middle School Association
4807 Evanswood Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43229-6292
(614) 848-8211

New England League of Middle Schools
15 Summer Street
P O Box 514
Rowley, Massachusetts 01969
(508) 948-7391

PTA Project HOPE
(Harness Our Parent Energy)
705 Cornish Drive
San Diego, California 92107
(619) 226-2416

Renaissance of Learning
Institute for the Study of Multiple Intelligences
University of California, Riverside
Riverside, California 92521-0112
(714) 787-4361

Valued Youth Partnership Program
(peer tutoring initiative)
Intercultural Development Research Association
5835 Callaghan, Suite 350
San Antonio, Texas 78228
(512) 684-8180

Vermont Department of Education
(portfolio assessment project)
Geof Hewitt, Basic Education
State Office Building
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
(802) 828-3111

Youth as Resources
(community service/mentoring projects)
Indiana University Natatorium
901 West New York Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46223
(317) 274-8605

Youth Service America
(community service project)
1319 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 783-8855

CONTACT SHEET

1. Name _____

2. Position _____

3. School/Organization _____

   address _____

   phone _____

   total number of students _____

   grade configuration _____

4. Describe school/organization: urban, suburban, rural, other _____

5. What did you learn from the monograph?

6. What part of the monograph was most useful to you?

7. What concerns do you have about middle level education that were not addressed in the monograph?

8. Would you like someone from the Indiana Department of Education to contact you with further information or inservice opportunities?

Please tear out this page and mail to:

Betwixt and Between
Office of School Assistance
Indiana Department of Education
Room 229, State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798
(317) 232-9141

WHAT IS A MIDDLE SCHOOLER?

What is a middle schooler?
I was asked one day.
I knew what he was,
But what should I say?

He is noise and confusion.
He is silence that is deep.
He is sunshine and laughter
Or a cloud that will weep.

He is swift as an arrow.
He is a waster of time.
He wants to be rich.
But cannot save a dime.

He is rude and nasty.
He is polite as can be.
He wants parental guidance,
But fights to be free.

He is aggressive and bossy.
He is timid and shy.
He knows all the answers,
But still will ask "why."

He is awkward and clumsy.
He is graceful and poised.
He is ever changing,
But do not be annoyed.

What is a middle schooler?
I was asked one day.
He is the future unfolding,
So do not stand in his way.

- By an anonymous eighth grader

(From Jon Wiles and Joseph Bondi, *The Essential Middle School*, 1986.)

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